

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, 14, 18-22, 40, 43-46, 60, 63-87 are pending in the application, with 14, 40, 63, 70, and 77 being the independent claims. Claims 1-13, 15-17, 23-39, 41, 42, 47-59, 61, and 62 were previously cancelled. Claims 40 and 43-46 were withdrawn from consideration. Claims 14, 63, 70, and 77 are sought to be amended. New claims 80-87 are sought to be added. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 14, 18-22, 60, and 63-79 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,583,377 to Higgins III (hereinafter Higgins-1) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,020,637 to Karnezos (hereinafter Karnezos) and U.S. Patent No. 5,291,062 to Higgins III (hereinafter Higgins-2).

Applicants have amended independent claims 14, 63, 70, and 77, to overcome the Examiner's rejection in order to expedite prosecution. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 14, 63, 70, and 77, are patentable over

Higgins-1, Karnezos, and Higgins-2, alone or in combination, for at least these reasons. Claims 18-22, 60, 64-69, 71-76, 78, and 79, which depend therefrom, are also patentable for these reasons, and further in light of their own features. Applicants also have added new claims 80-87, which depend from independent claims 14, 63, 70, and 77, and further recite their own additional patentable features. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection of these claims.

Other Matters

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's consideration of the documents submitted to the USPTO with Information Disclosure Statements on January 31, 2002, May 9, 2002, and October 11, 2002. Applicants submit a third supplemental Information Disclosure Statement herewith that lists further documents for the Examiner's consideration.

Conclusion

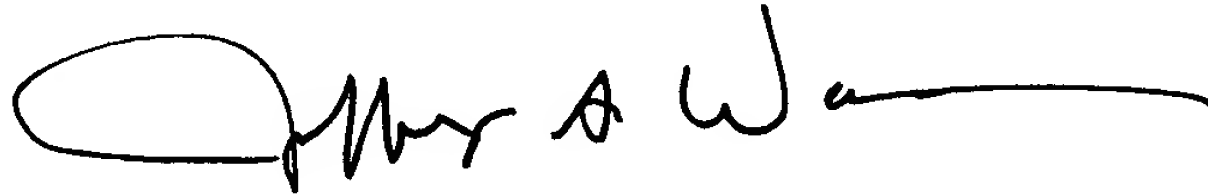
All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will

expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

STERNE, KESSLER, GOLDSTEIN & FOX P.L.L.C.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey S. Weaver", with a large, stylized initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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